

Community Attitudes Survey 2004

Preliminary Summary

For Plymouth, New Hampshire

November 2, 2004

In August 2004, the Plymouth Planning Board mailed an eight-page community attitudes survey to **1043** addresses in Plymouth. The survey was developed to help the Planning Board prepare the new Master Plan. Two hundred seventy-six surveys were completed, a 26 percent response rate (A 20 percent response rate for community surveys is considered typical and very good by researchers who conduct surveys.) All of the survey responses have been entered into a computer database for analysis.

Please note that a number of the questions were open-ended and the written commentary has not been included this summary. However, all of the written comments are available in the electronic database as well as in the Survey Appendix. The following pages provide a preliminary summary of the survey. An Executive Summary will be available in December.

QUESTION I.

1a. Respondents to the 1989 and 1995 Community Attitude Survey gave very high ratings to the following town characteristics:

1. Natural setting
2. University facilities and opportunities for continuing education
3. Clean air
4. Small town atmosphere
5. Access to transportation routes
6. Public school system
7. Open space

Do you agree that these characteristics continue to be significant in making Plymouth an attractive place to live and work?

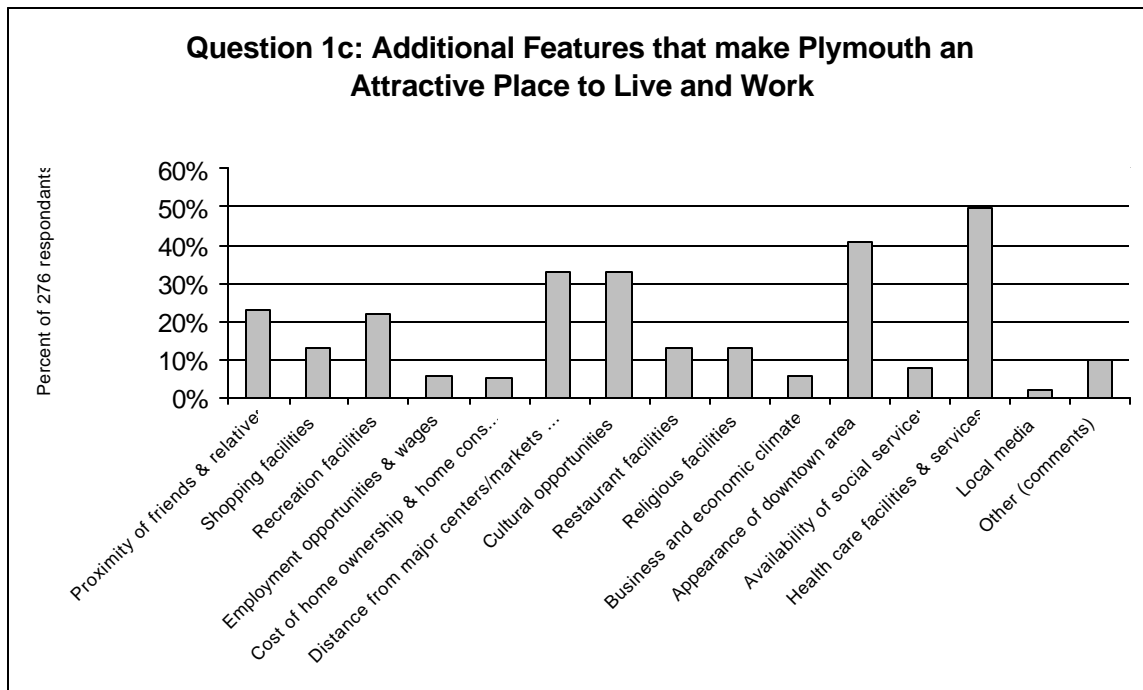
	Yes	No	No Opinion	No Response
Count	221	42	6	4
Percentage	81%	15%	2%	1%

1b. If no, what should be removed from the list?

	Count
Total Written Responses	44
1. Natural Setting	1
2. University facilities and opportunities for continuing education	16
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Provide NO significant advantage directly to Plymouth tax payers.</i> • <i>Anyone from other towns/cities have equal opportunities!!!</i> • <i>The college takes over too much of the town, residents are forced to pay higher taxes. University is a mill stone on our neck.</i> • <i>University should pay there fair share of taxes. Afterall they use all of the towns' services.</i> • <i>The lack of control the administration has over the 4000+ guests they present to our town makes our community less appealing.</i> • <i>The university, which actually makes Plymouth, based on taxes, crime, etc., a less attractive place to live.</i> • <i>The university is becoming more & more of a pain - traffic-fire calls-police problems- open space more & more property is going to the college & taxes are being distributed to local residents.</i> • <i>The university's facilities should be curtailed in its growth in this town. It has smothered the town & growth should be spread into adjacent Holderness.</i> • <i>College is too large - taking over town & not paying their share.</i> • <i>Less PSU dominance on the town, small town atmosphere needs to recognize population growth up I-93 corridor.</i> • <i>I think the university should go - they don't pay their share & it makes taxes high for the rest of us.</i> 	
3. Clean Air	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Plymouth needs to improve on its way of sewage treatment.</i> • <i>Clean air seems to be a problem downtown.</i> • <i>Several times I've smelt a horrible sewer type odor. Very nasty down towards the theatre & Kwik Check.</i> 	
4. Small Town Atmosphere	9
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Plymouth is losing its small town atmosphere.</i> • <i>Too much emphasis is placed on developing downtown which will never happen - no parking.</i> • <i>Plymouth may be losing the small town atmosphere, what with the addition of WalMart, Home Depot, Fairgrounds Rd. development.</i> • <i>Downtown/college changes have destroyed the "center of town" feeling, & not just because of TMH development.</i> 	
5. Access to Transportation Routes	2
6. Public School System	3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>The property tax rate reflects the superiority of our services.</i> 	
7. Open Space	7
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>All are still very good accept for open space - mostly due to the college cordonning off, limiting public access to sections.</i> • <i>Open spaces are fast disappearing. How does this differ from any other community?</i> 	
Yes, except that WalMart destroyed part of these appealing characteristics, anyone who voted to accept WalMart should feel deep shame.	

1c. From the following list, circle the number of the next three things that make Plymouth an attractive place to live and work:

	Count	Percentage Responding
Proximity of friends and relatives	63	23%
Shopping facilities	37	13%
Recreation facilities (e.g. Fox Park, local trails, launch)	60	22%
Employment opportunities and wages	18	6%
Cost of home ownership and home construction	14	5%
Distance from major centers/markets and highway	90	33%
Cultural opportunities	92	33%
Restaurant facilities	36	13%
Religious facilities	37	13%
Business and economic climate	16	6%
Appearance of downtown area	114	41%
Availability of social services	23	8%
Health care facilities and services	138	50%
Local media (e.g. newspapers, access channel)	7	2%
Other (27 written comments – see Appendix)	27	10%



QUESTION II.

2a. Of the problems associated with living and/or working in Plymouth, respondents to the 1989 and 1995 Community Attitudes Survey considered the following to be most severe:

1. Limited shopping facilities
2. Expansion of Plymouth State University
3. Cost of housing
4. Not enough parking downtown
5. Property tax rate
6. Cost of goods and services

Do you agree that these characteristics continue to be the most pressing problems associated with living and/or working in Plymouth?

	Yes	No	No Opinion	No Response
Count	168	100	4	4
Percentage	61%	36%	1%	1%

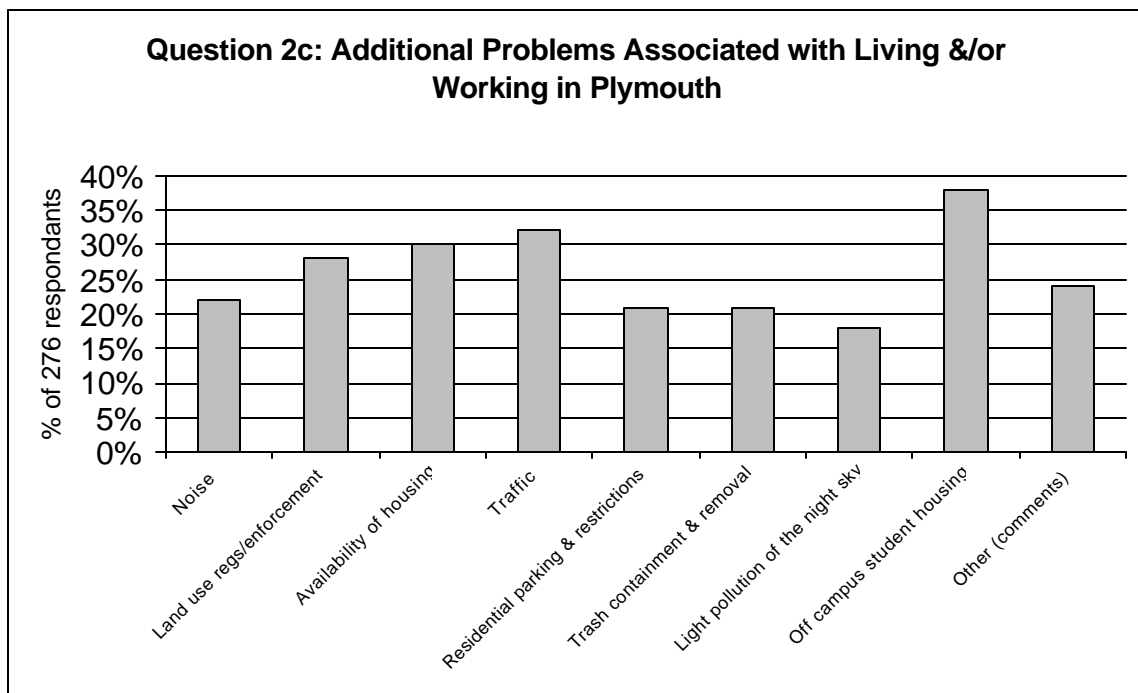
2b. If no, what should be removed from the list?

	Count
Total Written Responses	154
1. Limited Shopping Facilities	58
<i>Sufficient shopping for a town this size</i>	
<i>Need to utilize Hatch Plaza for alternative to Walmart, more options. Bring back the Dollar store.</i>	
<i>Need more but growing, have Tilton as more move in we've competition</i>	
<i>We can get almost everything we need within a 25 m drive)</i>	
<i>No WalMart!</i>	
<i>I just returned from Nashua – ugh</i>	
<i>WalMart is great! Need a Home Depot/Lowe's next!</i>	
<i>I would hate to see more "super centers" or strip malls in the Plymouth area. If we expand shopping - keep it downtown, enhance downtown area, especially area by the river! How about walkways along river?</i>	
<i>There's plenty of shopping.</i>	
<i>Walmart has relieved limited shopping and costs somewhat.</i>	
2. Expansion of PSU	42
<i>PSU should never have been there</i>	
<i>PSU expansion or churches are german to Plymouth's problems</i>	
<i>Should be encouraged-good jobs</i>	
<i>Expansion of PSU is positive</i>	
<i>I don't see expansion of PSU as a particular problem. If the Master Plan is also expanding the economic base & good housing.</i>	
<i>Expansion is going to happen & should be embraced with cooperation, not adversity. Our infrastructure (public safety bldg.) needs improvement.</i>	
<i>College expansion per se is no a problem - but how it's managed.</i>	
3. Cost of Housing	12

4. Not enough parking downtown	14
<i>There is ample parking down town</i>	
<i>Not enough parking downtown & residential streets</i>	
<i>Parking is not in the top 6!</i>	
5. Property tax rate	8
<i>Tax rate too high, discourages business growth. Need to fill Ames space.</i>	
<i>The property tax rate reflects the superiority of our services.</i>	
6. Costs of Goods and Services	20
<i>How does this differ from any other community?</i>	
<i>We have not found them out of line with other places</i>	
<i>I think prices are reasonable.</i>	
<i>We don't think higher than other places in NH</i>	

2c. From the following list, circle the number of the next three things that you consider to be problems associated with living and/or working in Plymouth.

	Count	Percentage
Noise	60	22%
Local land use regulations/enforcement	76	28%
Availability of housing	83	30%
Traffic	87	32%
Residential parking/parking restrictions	58	21%
Trash containment and removal	59	21%
Light pollution of the night sky	50	18%
Off campus student housing	104	38%
Other (67 written responses – see Appendix)	67	24%



Part 2d. Specific comments about any of the items in the previous list:

See Appendix for Written Comments	Count
Noise	32
Local land use regulations/enforcement	36
Availability of housing	28
Traffic	35
Residential parking/parking restrictions	13
Trash containment and removal	18
Light pollution of the night sky	15
Off campus student housing	73
Other (67 written responses – see Appendix)	40

QUESTION III.

3a. Are you satisfied with the following facilities or services in Plymouth?

	Percentage of 276 Respondants			
	Yes	No	No Opinion	No Response
Elderly accommodations, hospice	39%	14%	46%	1%
Hospitality establishments (e.g., hotels, motels, restaurants)	72%	19%	7%	2%
Sidewalks	52%	39%	7%	2%
Health services (medical, dental, etc.)	90%	6%	2%	2%
Entertainment (e.g. movie theater, cable TV)	80%	13%	4%	3%
Downtown parking	32%	61%	5%	2%
Recreation opportunities	69%	20%	8%	3%
Public transportation (e.g. bus service, taxi service)	31%	36%	30%	3%
Public schools (elementary & high schools)	75%	8%	14%	3%
Town services:				
Library	89%	3%	5%	3%
Fire prevention and protection	89%	3%	5%	3%
Law enforcement	80%	13%	4%	3%
Road maintenance, pavement, snow removal	56%	39%	3%	2%
Recycling	88%	5%	4%	3%
Water and Sewer	61%	21%	13%	5%
Community Planning	45%	26%	25%	4%
Airport	39%	7%	49%	5%
Cemeteries	55%	2%	39%	4%
Street lighting	61%	19%	15%	5%
Other: (17 items identified - see Appendix)	1%	5%	0%	94%

- 3b.** From the above list, indicate the specific facilities or services you would like to see improved or expanded in Plymouth. Please be specific.

	Count	Percentage
Elderly accommodations, hospice	16	6%
Hospitality establishments (e.g. hotels, motels, restaurants)	28	10%
Sidewalks	62	23%
Health services (medical, dental, emergency care)	3	1%
Entertainment (e.g. movie theater, cable TV, Silver Arts Center)	18	7%
Downtown parking	59	21%
Recreation opportunities	29	11%
Public transportation (e.g. bus service, taxi service)	42	15%
Public schools (elementary and regional high schools)	13	5%
Town services:		
Library	8	3%
Fire prevention and protection	10	4%
Law enforcement	28	10%
Road maintenance, pavement, snow removal	68	25%
Recycling	13	5%
Water and Sewer	21	8%
Community Planning	22	8%
Airport	9	3%
Cemeteries	2	1%
Street lighting	27	10%
Other (13 written comments – see Appendix)	13	5%

For written descriptions of improvements or expansion: **See Appendix**

QUESTION IV.

- 4a.** Do you think the uses allowed in the “Agricultural Zone” should be changed?

	Count	Percentage
Reduce the variety of uses	73	26%
Maintain the variety of uses	117	42%
Increase the variety of uses	36	13%
No Response	50	18%

- 4b.** Should the “Agricultural Zone” be divided into other zones to create more separation of commercial and business uses from residential uses?

	Yes	No	No Opinion	No Response
Count	126	80	52	17
Percentage	46%	29%	19%	6%

QUESTION V.

The Town of Plymouth should . . .

- 5a.** regulate the placement and screening of dumpsters and trash containers

	Yes	No	No Opinion	No Response
Count	197	34	38	7
Percentage	71%	12%	14%	3%

- 5b.** regulate residential parking based on lot size, number of bedrooms and site constraints

	Yes	No	No Opinion	No Response
Count	181	50	37	8
Percentage	66%	18%	13%	3%

- 5c.** aggressively promote commercial and industrial growth in currently permitted zones

	Yes	No	No Opinion	No Response
Count	177	70	24	5
Percentage	64%	25%	9%	2%

- 5d.** collaborate with neighboring towns to encourage economic development within the region

	Yes	No	No Opinion	No Response
Count	230	19	23	4
Percentage	83%	7%	8%	1%

- 5e.** encourage preservation of scenic, historical and ecologically sensitive areas through regulation and public and private cooperative efforts

	Yes	No	No Opinion	No Response
Count	230	16	27	3
Percentage	83%	6%	10%	1%

- 5f.** strictly enforce zoning, planning, and land use regulations and conditions of approval

	Yes	No	No Opinion	No Response
Count	206	31	30	9
Percentage	75%	11%	11%	3%

- 5g.** strengthen the zoning ordinance to regulate the location and number of unregistered vehicles and scrap material, in residential neighborhoods

	Yes	No	No Opinion	No Response
Count	229	23	16	8
Percentage	83%	8%	6%	3%

- 5h. adopt a building code that establishes standards for structural, electrical and plumbing components of buildings

	Yes	No	No Opinion	No Response
Count	183	55	32	6
Percentage	66%	20%	12%	2%

- 5i. accept maintenance responsibility for roads constructed in accordance with town standards in new developments and take them over as town roads

	Yes	No	No Opinion	No Response
Count	185	47	40	4
Percentage	67%	17%	15%	1%

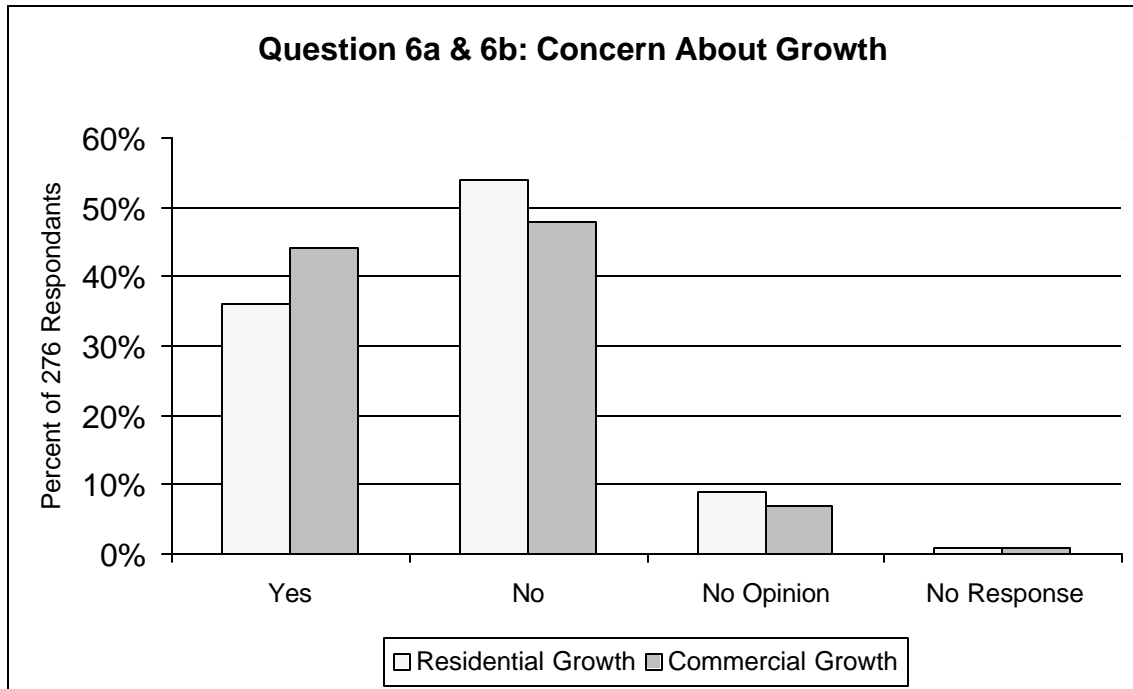
QUESTION VI. Growth

- 6a. Are you concerned about the present rate of residential growth in Plymouth?

	Yes	No	No Opinion	No Response
Count	99	149	25	3
Percentage	36%	54%	9%	1%

- 6b. Are you concerned about the present rate of commercial growth in Plymouth?

	Yes	No	No Opinion	No Response
Count	120	133	20	3
Percentage	44%	48%	7%	1%



QUESTION VII. Housing

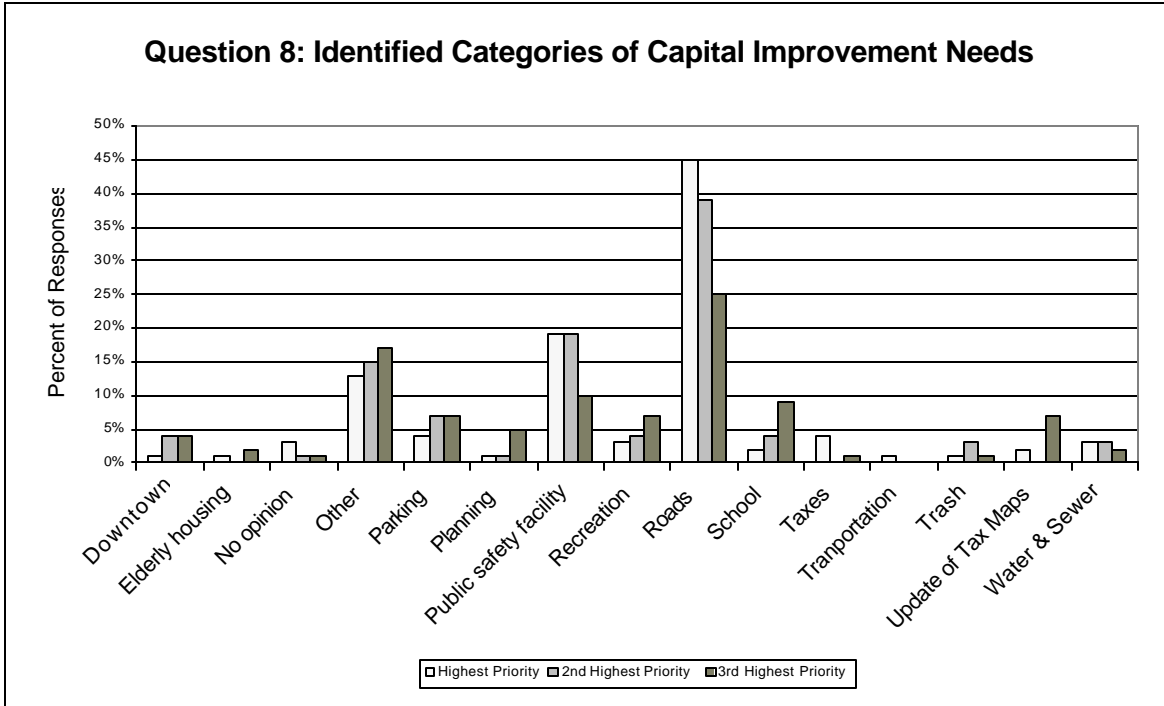
Please check the column that describes your attitude towards new housing in Plymouth.

Percentage of 276 Respondants

	In Favor	Opposed	No Opinion	No Response
Single-family homes	90%	1%	5%	4%
Multi-family homes	39%	37%	16%	8%
Apartment buildings with > 6 units	26%	54%	13%	7%
Condominiums	46%	31%	16%	7%
Manufactured housing (mobile homes)	29%	48%	17%	6%
Elderly housing	80%	7%	8%	5%
In-law apartments	71%	7%	16%	6%
Open space developments or clustered housing	55%	22%	15%	8%

QUESTION VIII. Capital Improvements Planning What do you think are the major capital needs facing the community? See Appendix for detailed listing of identified needs.

	Identified Capital Needs	Total Responses
Highest Priority	152	67%
Next Highest Priority	109	42%
Next Highest Priority	77	29%



QUESTION IX. Resource Protection

9a. Please check the column that describes your attitude towards the following:

Percentage of 276 Respondants

	In Favor	Opposed	No Opinion	No Response
Regulations protecting floodplains	73%	7%	15%	5%
Regulations protecting wetlands	74%	7%	15%	4%
Preservation of woodlands	76%	8%	13%	3%
Preservation of agricultural land	73%	8%	15%	4%
Public open space	79%	3%	13%	5%
Regulations protecting historic resources	80%	4%	11%	5%

9b. Would you support the use of your tax dollars to purchase property or easements for the following purposes?

Percentage of 276 Respondants

	In Favor	Opposed	No Opinion	No Response
Conservation	59%	23%	13%	5%
Recreation	61%	24%	9%	6%
Scenic Views	45%	33%	15%	7%
Trail Systems	56%	26%	13%	5%
Historic Preservation	62%	21%	11%	6%
Wetlands	54%	25%	15%	6%

QUESTION X. Specific Issue Questions

10a. The size, location, height, lighting and number of signs are currently regulated in Plymouth. Are you satisfied with the way signs are regulated in Plymouth?

	Yes	No	No Opinion	No Response
Count	176	59	32	9
Percentage	64%	21%	12%	3%

10b. If you answered “no” to #10a, what would you like to see changed? Please be specific.(e.g. size, location, height, material, lighting) **66 suggestions offered (see Appendix)**

10c. Do you perceive there is an excessive demand on town services and facilities in Plymouth by entities exempt from paying property taxes?

	Yes	No	No Opinion	No Response
Count	187	45	33	11
Percentage	68%	16%	12%	4%

10d. If yes, give examples: **156 examples offered (See Appendix)**

QUESTION XI. General Questions (This information will be used to track future trends.)

11a. How long have you lived in Plymouth?

	Count	Percentage
Less than 5 years	43	15%
5 to 10 years	40	15%
10 to 20 years	60	24%
Over 20 years	122	44%
No response	5	2%

11b. What town(s) do you and members of your household work in?

- 59% work in Plymouth
- 5% work in Concord
- 3% work in Laconia
- 23% work in "other location"
- 16% of respondents are retired

11c. Do you own a business in Plymouth?

	Yes	No	No Response
Count	51	212	13
Percentage	18%	77%	5%

11d. How long has your business been in operation?

	Count	Percentage
Less than 5 years	6	2%
5 to 10 years	10	3%
10 to 20 years	18	7%
Over 20 years	19	7%
No response	223	81%